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PHD DISSERTATION PROJECTS

Mediaeval Transfer, Transmission, and Reception of the Latin / andiceoitoii Culture in the Saga of the Romans (*Rómverja saga*, AM 595 a–b 4o and AM 226 fol.)

Grzegorz Bartusik, University of Silesia in Katowice

Dissertation project undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Institute of History, University of Silesia, Poland, scheduled for submission in September 2019.

Supervisor: Jakub Morawiec (University of Silesia in Katowice).

Since the beginning of 2014, I have carried out a project on *Antikensagas*, the Sagas of Antiquity, both in Iceland as a visiting researcher at the University of Iceland, the University of Oslo, and at the University College of Southeast Norway. What was at first a research reconnaissance on the reception of Antiquity in mediaeval Iceland – with time and much sound counsel from my friends and mentors in the North – developed into a project for my PhD dissertation on *The Saga of the Romans* (*Rómverja saga*) in the context of mediaeval cultural transfer between continental Europe and Scandinavia.

This project has been implemented with support from Iceland and Norway, through a grant from the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism under the Scholarship and Training Fund (The EEA & Norway Grants). In the following brief project description, I will introduce this work, which will continue until September 2019.

Since this is an ongoing PhD project, the following conclusions are bound to be preliminary. However, I hope they will be helpful to any reader interested in Latin-Ancient Roman influences on Old Norse-Icelandic culture and in Old Norse-Icelandic and Latin-Old Norse interferences.

My doctoral thesis focuses on Icelandic literature and society from around 1200–1400 in the context of the reception and reinterpretation of Latin/Ancient Roman culture in mediaeval Icelandic texts after the late introduction of non-runic written culture in

Scandinavia. The purpose of the thesis is to discuss the possible Latin/Ancient Roman influences on Old Norse-Icelandic literature and culture. It employs *Rómverja saga* as an example, along with related Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

The chronological framework I set up for my thesis extends from as early as the second half of the 12th century (the composition of *Rómverja saga* has often been dated to around 1180), to as late as the half of 14th century, when the preserved manuscripts were produced (AM 595 a-b 4o and AM 226 fol.). The mediaeval manuscript known as AM 595 a–b 4o contains an earlier, fragmented version of *Rómverja saga*, the history of the Romans. *Rómverja saga* is a collection of Old Norse translations of selected ancient Latin works: Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* and *De coniuratione Catilinae*, and Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. The younger version is preserved in the manuscript AM 226 fol.

Until recently, *Rómverja saga* was little studied. Over the years, *Rómverja saga* manuscripts have been edited by Konráð Gíslason (1860), Meißner (1910), and, most recently, Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (2010). The research on *Rómverja saga* manuscripts, including, the questions of dating them (and the text itself), manuscript authorship, ownership and provenance, and the narrative's connections to *Sverris saga* and *Veraldar saga* has been conducted by Meißner (1903), Hofmann (1986), Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (1987–1988; 1996), Hermann Pálsson (1988; 1991),

Gropper (Würth) (1998; 2009), Robertson (2004), Stoltz (2009) and Wellendorf (2014).

My approach, however, goes beyond these questions. I examine the place of *Rómverja saga* in the cultural transfer of knowledge and learning, as well as the saga's place in the *civilizing process* of Europeanisation of Scandinavia.

Latin or Ancient Roman culture had flowed into Scandinavia via waves of texts from the South. Literary contacts between continental Europe and Scandinavia started as early as the Christianisation of the North. Powerful currents of Latin learning and continental European culture were felt in Iceland from that period onward. The North underwent Christianisation, the first profound colonial *civilizing process*, in the 11th and 12th centuries. The region opened up to Latin culture, and later to the courtly culture and the primary intellectual stream of the Middle Ages in Europe – *translatio studii et imperii*, the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge – the transfer of written knowledge through translation – between the societies in Europe.

Rómverja saga is an interesting manifestation of the above-mentioned Europeanisation of the mediaeval North through the instrument of translation. By focusing on this 'displaced' text, an Old Norse-Icelandic translation/compilation of several Latin / Ancient Roman texts, I intend to highlight cultural connections between the two apparently unrelated times, namely Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and places, specifically between the Roman Empire and the Viking-Age and mediaeval Scandinavian kingdoms and the Icelandic Commonwealth. My PhD thesis aims to describe how certain Latin manuscripts that contained ancient Roman texts were imported from continental Europe and the British Isles to Scandinavia and Iceland to certain monasteries and cathedral schools. There, they ended up in the hands of monks who not only used them to teach Latin and possibly history, but also translated Latin texts into the vernacular. A further consequence of the importation of manuscripts is the influence the process yielded on the production of texts *in situ*, the education of the country's

intellectual elites and social change *sensu largo*.

I primarily focus on the main intellectual stream of the Middle Ages in Europe – *translatio studii*, cultural transfer or cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and learning between societies in Europe. I also examine the 'cultural imperialism' that helped the Catholic Church and the continental monarchies gain influence over Northern Europe. By these cultural means, they were inducing those within their sphere of influence to imitate the forms and values of the dominant culture.

I reflect on the mediaeval Icelanders' pursuit of knowledge about the South and Greco-Roman Antiquity as a deliberate activity undertaken at all levels: beginning with the import of manuscripts, translation practices, intertextual relations, cultural transfer, and ending with changes in social cognition and mentality.

Preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion, my dissertation is divided into five parts. The first part establishes the methodical and theoretical background of my approach to the Icelandic sagas and ancient Roman literature. The second part concerns the background of cultural transfer: people, places, trails, institutions, structures, and manuscripts. The third part is a textual analysis of *Rómverja saga* addressing the question of what became of the ancient Roman text that would eventually be translated by a mediaeval Icelandic. The fourth part examines the intertextual relations surrounding *Rómverja saga* and addresses how the saga became intertwined with vernacular Icelandic literature. In the fifth part, I focus on the strata of the social cognition as resembled by the language of the texts, looking for traces of Latin-Old Norse interfaces, points where these two conceptual worlds meet and interact.

Throughout my discussion I refer to a number of theoretical perspectives employed in fields such as linguistics, literary studies, and history. My inspiration for this work is Stephen Greenblatt's cultural poetics theory. The research undertaken in this study is also based upon methodological principles set out by postcolonial theory, intertextuality theory, approaches to cognitive linguistics as

established by George Lakoff, and approaches to cognitive poetics by Peter Stockwell. These theories enable me to examine *Rómverja saga* from many different angles. The resulting portrait is that of a complex phenomenon featuring material, textual, intertextual, and socio-cultural dimensions.

In the second part of my study I seek answers for a basic question: how did the classics (Lucanus and Sallustius in the case of *Rómverja saga*) reach Iceland from continental Europe? What was their route of transmission? I take a close look at the social institutions and structures of Scandinavia that produced a vital environment for literary activity (literary milieus, patronage, and monasticism), at the migratory networks of people travelling between Scandinavia and the continent (scholars, students, pilgrims, missionaries, or travellers) and at the lineages of transmission. I ask, what enabled this case of transcultural translation? What were the channels of transmission that reinforced this flow of ideas? For example, manuscripts may have been transmitted along the same route scholars, students, pilgrims, missionaries and travellers followed, such people bringing manuscripts, books and other material sources of knowledge home with them.

Digging into the textual strata of this case of cultural transfer, I open up an intertextual perspective. I ask, what happened to this cultural product that travelled through time and space to emerge and become enshrined in new contexts and configurations? What are the differences between the original text and the target text? How did the translator re-read the text? The translator, confronted with the texts of foreign linguistic, sociohistorical, cultural and literary origins, as ancient Rome must have been to a mediaeval Icelandic, had to decode the text and translate it not only from a foreign language into his or her own but also from a foreign cultural context into his or her own. Differences and tension within the text indicate the presence of conflicting discourses. This is particularly valid not only within the interfaces of cultures and languages that occur in the translated text but especially in the case of a text that was created as a compilation of texts, texts that had originated in different ideological contexts. How did the compiler of

Rómverja saga resolve the contradiction between the republican Sallustius, whose works have radical ideological implication and share a tragic pattern of fictionalisation and the monarchist Lucanus, whose writings have conservative ideological implications and share an epic pattern of fictionalisation? In this part of my dissertation, I explore omissions, additions, and other modifications that indicate shifts in ideology, from anti-royalist to monarchist, and changes in fictionalisation patterns.

With the flow of Latin learning to Iceland, the Old Norse-Icelandic conceptual world did not remain intact. The classics imported from the South and the Latin language had an important influence on the mediaeval Northern World. Through translation, mediaeval Icelanders incorporated European culture into their own, which made them not only familiar with continental European culture but also enabled them to identify with the region. Therefore, in the following part of my dissertation, I also seek to answer the following questions: to what extent was Old Norse-Icelandic language and literature, in the sense of semantics/meaning, influenced by Latin language and literature? Changes in mentality came hand-in-hand with language change. But what exactly was the influence of classical ideas on Old Norse-Icelandic thought? Might these ideas have been to a certain degree integrated into the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders? Or at least the mentality of certain groups inside mediaeval Icelandic society? In my dissertation, I explore these questions while looking for evidence of the transfer of social norms in the form of cognitive metaphors from continental Europe as it appears in the Sagas of Antiquity (*Antikensagas*) and the vernacular sagas.

The research in this part of my dissertation focuses on social cognition in the context of Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic literature and language, their interfaces, the cross-cultural adaptation of cognitive structures (a process wherein a bit of cultural information is brought into a society), its existing schemata, existing meaning structures, and how it may be subsequently accommodated and assimilated into the social structure, causing changes in mentality and worldview.

In order to see the network of beliefs and attitudes (connected with the worldview of the cultural community from which it stems) which underlie *Rómverja saga* and its *texti recepti*, Sallustius and Lucanus (and which would be otherwise invisible while always implicit in the texture of the saga), I dig deeper into the text and its language to find cognitive structures and metaphors.

On the basis of ancient Roman literature, *Antikensagas* and other vernacular Icelandic sagas and poetry, I draw a social-cognitive models of personality (based on the ancient Roman virtues: *virtus*, *pietas*, *fides*, *iustitia*, *prudentia*, *gravitas*, *clementia*, etc.) and cognitive models of luck and fate as understood by Romans (the *fatum* – *Felicitas* – *fortuna* – *fors* – *infelicitas* complex) and Icelanders (the *auðna* – *gifta* – *gæfa* – *hamingja* – *happ* – *heill* complex) with its cognitive structures, metaphors, schemata, and explanatory models. I detect and analyse differences and similarities between them, and trace Ancient Roman/Latin substrata in a ON-I model. Using as examples works by Lucanus and Sallustius, and works such as *Rómverja saga* and other *Antikensagas*, as well as related vernacular ON-I literature, I consider the following: First, if and how were these cultural concepts translated from Latin to ON-I? Second, how was meaning changed, accommodated, or adapted? Third, to what extent was ON-I language, in the sense of semantics and meaning, influenced by Latin? Fourth, might these Ancient Roman-Latin ideas have been to a certain degree integrated into the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders (or at least the worldview of certain groups inside mediaeval Icelandic society)? Fifth, if yes, in what way was the mentality of mediaeval Icelanders affected by these concepts?

Literature is actively involved in the making of society. It plays a significant role in discursive practice. Texts participate in creating the cultural moment from which they originated and in which they were read, and should be associated with other phenomena in society that occurred during a given period. Literature produces cultural effects. The truly important feature of this phenomenon is the creation of hybrid cultures open to continued changes. Therefore, we should read cultural

transfer in terms of ‘cultural transplantation’: elements become grafted from one ‘cultural body’ to another and are in turn adapted to new cultural environments. Through an assimilationist attitude towards foreign language and culture – Latin in the case of mediaeval Scandinavia – it was willingly and knowingly embraced by leading mediaeval Icelandic intellectuals as a *modus operandi* of the society's Europeanisation. Ultimately, a kind of hybrid identity was developed in the North, which consisted of the following substrates: Old Norse oral tradition, Christianity, and continental Latin culture.

The present project will contribute to the extant body of research on the mediaeval cultural transfer by producing a monograph on the case of *Rómverja saga*. This monograph will enhance our understanding of the development of the mediaeval Icelandic society embedded deeply in the pre-Christian traditions, but strongly influenced by Christianity and Latinity.

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***Berserkir*: A Re-Examination of the Phenomenon in Literature and Life**

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Dissertation project undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the School of English, University of Nottingham, U.K., degree awarded on 10th December 2014. Available at: <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/28819/>.

Supervisor: Judith Jesch (University of Nottingham).

Examiners: Christina Lee (University of Nottingham) and Alaric Hall (University of Leeds).

This thesis reappraises the nature and depictions of *berserkir* (sing. *berserkr*), figures known primarily from Old Norse literature. It challenges the stereotype of the violent, out-of-control, liminal character and seeks to replace it with a more nuanced interpretation. In doing so, this thesis defines three models for *berserkir*: the probable Viking-Age reality, the medieval literary character, and the modern popular depiction.

The key question the thesis asks is: did *berserkir* in literature and reality go *berserk* in the modern English sense of the word?

Typically, research has taken it as a given that they did, and that the key question was how they did this. Suggestions have included: eating *amanita muscaria* (Ödmann 1925 I: 177–183; Schübeler 1885 I: 224–226; Fabing 1956: 232–257); consuming alcohol (Wille 1786: 273–274; Poestion 1884: 129–148); suffering from mental illness (Grøn 1929: 43–58; Shay 2003: 77–99); and via shamanic practices (Peuckert 1988: 88–100), among others. The unthinking assumption that *berserkir* went berserk has shaped the dialogue and vocabulary around them to the point where